Whistleblowing Policy

1. Introduction
The University is committed to the highest standards of openness, probity and accountability. It seeks to conduct its affairs in a responsible manner taking into account the requirements of the funding bodies and the standards in public life set out in the reports of the Nolan Committee.

Normally any concern about a workplace situation should be raised with the employee’s immediate manager or Head of Department; in the case of students, concerns would normally be raised through the complaints procedures. However, it is recognised that because of the seriousness and sensitivity of some issues, together with the knowledge of who the employee (or student) thinks may be involved in wrongdoing, this may be difficult or even impossible.

The Public Interest Disclosure Act gives legal protection to employees again being dismissed or penalised by their employers as a result of publicly disclosing certain serious concerns provided that they are disclosed under procedures identified in the Act. It is a fundamental term of every contract of employment that an employee will faithfully serve his or her employer and not disclose confidential information about the employer’s affairs. However, where an individual discovers information which they believe shows malpractice/wrongdoing within the organisation then there should be identified procedures to enable the individual to disclose the information without fear or reprisal, and it may be necessary for the disclosures to be made independently of line management.

This policy sets out arrangements for individuals to raise serious concerns about malpractice or serious wrongdoing in ways which will protect them from reprisal. This policy is intended to meet the requirements of the Act but it goes further in two aspects. Firstly, it extends the list of concerns where a protected disclosure may be made beyond those identified in the Act. Secondly, it extends protection for disclosure beyond employees to students and to other members of the University.

It should be emphasised that this policy is intended to assist individuals who believe they have discovered malpractice or serious wrongdoing provided that they make the disclosure in accordance with the policy, it is not designed to question financial or business decisions taken by the University nor may it be used to reconsider any matters which have already been addressed under harassment, complaint or student conduct procedures. Individuals who make disclosures outside the arrangements set out here will not be protected under this policy and may not be protected under the Act.

2. Scope of Policy
This policy is designed to enable employees or other members of the university to raise concerns or disclose information at a higher level which the individual believes shows malpractice.

A number of policies and procedures are already in place including grievance, Code of Student Conduct, complaints and guidelines for dealing with harassment and Bullying. This policy is intended to cover concerns which are in the public interest and may (at least initially) be investigated separately but might then lead to the using of such procedures. These might include:

- financial malpractice or impropriety or fraud
- failure to comply with a legal obligation
- dangers to health and safety of the environment
- criminal activity
- miscarriage of justice
- academic malpractice
- improper conduct or unethical behaviour
- attempts to conceal any of the above.

This is not intended to be a comprehensive list and any matters raised under this policy will be considered seriously.

3. Safeguards

Protection
This policy is designed to offer protection to those employees or other members of the University who disclose such concerns provided the disclosure is made:

i. in accordance with the procedures laid down
ii. in good faith, and
iii. in the reasonable belief of the individual making the disclosure that it tends to show malpractice.

Confidentiality
The University will treat all such disclosures in a confidential and sensitive manner. The identity of the individual making the allegation may be kept confidential so long as it does not hinder or frustrate any investigation. However, the investigation process may reveal the source of the information and the individual
making the disclosure may need to provide a statement as part of the evidence required. **Anonymous Allegations**

This policy encourages individuals to put their name to any disclosures they make. Concerns expressed anonymously are much less powerful, but they will be considered at the discretion of the University. In exercising this discretion, the factors to be taken into account will include:

- the seriousness of the issues raised;
- the credibility of the concern; and
- the likelihood of confirming the allegation from alternative credible sources.

**Untrue allegations**

If an individual makes an allegation in good faith, which is not confirmed by subsequent investigation, no action will be taken against that individual. If, however, the investigation shows that an individual has made malicious or vexatious allegations, and particularly if he or she persists with making them, disciplinary action may be taken against the individual concerned.

4. **Procedures for Making a Disclosure**

**Initial Step**

The individual should make the disclosure to the Registrar & Secretary (the designated person). If, however, the disclosure is about the Registrar & Secretary then the disclosure may be made either to the Vice-Chancellor or the Chair of Council. Correspondence marked for the attention of the Chair of Council or the Chair of the Audit and Risk Management Committee can be sent via the Vice-Chancellor’s Office.